



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

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PHOENIX RESIDENTS CHARGED WITH STEALING FROM GILA RIVER INDIAN CASINO

PHOENIX- A federal grand jury in Phoenix returned a one count indictment against Jason C. Beal, 31, and Fernando Lechuga, 25, for fraudulently stealing \$9,400 in jackpots that never occurred. Both are from Phoenix and were charged with one count each of Theft by an Officer or Employee of a Gaming Establishment on Indian Lands in the incident which took place at Vee Quiva Casino in Laveen, Ariz.

Both Beal and Lechuga turned themselves into the U.S. Marshals Service and were arraigned on November 21, 2007. Both were released on their own recognizance by the U.S. Magistrate Judge. A trial date for both has been set for January 8, 2008.

The indictment against Beal and Lechuga alleges that on November 24, 2006, two jackpot slips, for \$4,900 and \$4,500, were written and signed by Lechuga, a slot attendant, and Beal, a slot assistant supervisor. Review of surveillance tapes confirm the jackpots never occurred and the slips were submitted in an attempt to steal money from the casino.

A conviction for Theft by an Officer or Employee of a Gaming Establishment on Indian Lands carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$ 1,000,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, the assigned U.S. District Court Judge will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation preceding the indictments were conducted by the Gila River Gaming Commission, the Gila River Police Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The prosecution is being handled by Mark Brnovich, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-07-1221-PHX
RELEASE NUMBER: 2007-244(Beal & Lechuga)

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